

The opposition Alliance Lepep won a surprising electoral victory in December 2014, unseating incumbent prime minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam's coalition. The results were widely interpreted as a reaction to Ramgoolam's proposed constitutional reform to increase the power of the president. Former prime minister Anerood Jugnauth was appointed to the post for his sixth non-consecutive term since 1982.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 38 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

The president, whose role is largely ceremonial, is elected by the unicameral National Assembly. Executive power resides with the prime minister, who is appointed by the president from the party or coalition with the most seats in the legislature. Of the National Assembly's 70 members, 62 are directly elected and up to 8 "best losers" are appointed from among unsuccessful candidates who gained the largest number of votes. The members of the National Assembly and the president serve five-year terms. Governance of the country's small island dependencies is largely decentralized. The largest dependency, Rodrigues Island, has its own government and local councils, and two seats in the National Assembly.

In September 2014, Mauritius's two main political parties—Ramgoolam's ruling Mauritian Labour Party (PTR) and former prime minister Paul Bérenger's Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM)—entered into a coalition and dissolved the parliament. Elections originally scheduled for May 2015 were pushed forward to December 2014. Electoral debate focused on the ruling coalition's proposal to increase the power of the ceremonial presidency by holding direct elections for the position. Although regarded as clear front-runners, the PTR-MMM coalition lost the election to the Alliance Lepep coalition, led by Jugnauth's Militant Socialist Movement (MSM), by a wide margin. The Alliance Lepep won 47 of the 62 elected seats, and Jugnauth was appointed prime minister.

In 2012, the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) ruled that a law requiring potential candidates to declare their ethnic and religious status constitutes a human rights violation. Ramgoolam's electoral reforms would have abolished the requirement and also redesigned the best loser system.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 15 / 16

Political parties operate freely, and the two highest political positions, the president and prime minister, have rotated between the three largest parties—the PTR, the MSM, and the MMM. The three parties champion democratic socialist doctrine. Smaller parties are often included in governing coalitions. More than 700 candidates registered for the December 2014 general elections. Only four different individuals have held the post of prime minister since independence in 1968.

C. Functioning of Government: 11 / 12

The country's generally positive reputation for transparency and accountability has been damaged by an ongoing scandal surrounding the government purchase of a private hospital in 2010. Separately, in 2010, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) launched an investigation into corruption allegations against Minister of Higher Education Rajesh Jeetah involving conflicts of interest in the operation of a local university branch. Mauritius was ranked 47 out of 175 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index, and the country has been ranked first in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance for eight consecutive years.

Civil Liberties: 52 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 15 / 16

The constitution guarantees the freedom of expression. Several private daily and weekly publications freely report on the ruling and opposition parties, but the state-owned Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation's radio and television services generally reflect government viewpoints. A small number of private radio stations compete with the state-run media. In December 2014, two suspects were arrested in connection with the release of an audio recording deemed defamatory toward the Jugnauth family. The case was pending at year's end. In August, charges against singer Nitin Chinien were dropped. Chinien was arrested in 2013 under the Information and Communications Technologies for posting online videos that, among other things, included threats to the prime minister. The internet is not generally restricted by the government.

Religious and academic freedoms are respected.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 12 / 12

Freedoms of assembly and association are honored, though police have occasionally used excessive force in response to riots in the past. There are more than 300 unions in Mauritius. However, tens of thousands of foreign workers employed in export processing zones suffer from poor living and working conditions, and their employers are reportedly hostile to unions. In 2013, striking Bangladeshi textile workers demanding better working conditions clashed with riot police.

F. Rule of Law: 13 / 16

The generally independent judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, administers a legal system that combines French and British traditions. The judicial system is considered transparent and nondiscriminatory. Mauritius has maintained the right of appeal to the Privy Council in London. Civil rights are largely respected, though individual cases of police brutality have been reported.

Various ethnic cultures and traditions coexist peacefully, and constitutional prohibitions against discrimination are generally upheld. However, Mauritian Creoles—descendants of African slaves who comprise about a third of the population—are culturally and economically marginalized. Tensions between the country's Hindu majority and Muslim minority persist. In a 2011 report, the Truth and Justice Commission (TJC)—established to examine the country's history of slavery and indentured labor—recommended measures to encourage national reconciliation, such as promoting increased economic and political participation by non-Hindu Mauritians.

Antisodomy laws exist, but the 2008 Equal Opportunities Act prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Faced with a complaint to the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2013, the Ministry of Health removed a controversial measure requiring blood donors to report their sexual orientation.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 12 / 16

Women comprise about a third of the labor force, but they receive less compensation than men for similar work. Women hold only 8 seats in the National Assembly and three positions in the cabinet. A 2012 gender quota law mandates that at least one-third of candidates in local elections be women, and women's representation at the local government level is 26 percent. Similar legislation has been proposed at the national level. Rape and domestic violence remain major concerns.

To protect its aging population, the government has passed the Protection for Elderly Persons Act of 2005, the Residential Care Homes Act of 2003, and the National Policy on Ageing 2008. However, abuse of the elderly remains a growing problem.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)